



# **GREENSBORO URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

## **TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of July 22, 2004**

**3:00 p.m. Greensboro, NC**

**Plaza Level Conference Room**

**Melvin Municipal Office Building**

**(Greensboro City Hall)**

### **TAC MEMBERS PRESENT**

Sandy Carmany	TAC Chair
Bob Landreth	Guilford County Board of Commissioners
Mary Rakestraw	Guilford County Board of Commissioners
Doug Galyon	NC Board of Transportation

### **ATTENDANCE**

Jim Westmoreland	TCC Chair	Mike Cowan	NCDOT, Division 7
Tyler Meyer	GDOT/MPO	Connie Morgan	NCDOT, Roadside Environmental Unit
Jeff Sovich	GDOT/MPO	Jeff Lackey	NCDOT, Roadside Environmental Unit
Craig McKinney	GDOT/MPO	Charles Brummitt	Piedmont Land Conservancy
Peggy Holland	GDOT/MPO	Robert Gordon	Town of Summerfield
Kimberly Hinton	NCDOT, TPB	Ray Combs	Town of Oak Ridge
Ken Taffer	NCDOT, Division 7		

Sandy Carmany called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m.

### **Action Items**

#### **1. Approve Minutes of May 27, 2004**

Bob Landreth moved for approval of the minutes. Mary Rakestraw seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes as prepared.

## **2. PART 04-10 MTIP Transit Amendment**

Jeff Sovich advised that the MTIP amendment presented makes three key changes to PART's Transfer Facility project, TD-4723A. First, this project is currently programmed for fiscal year 2004, however the schedule for this project has shifted to 2005. In order for PART to apply to FTA for funding reimbursement, the MTIP must be amended to reflect the new project schedule. Second, PART has received a discretionary allocation of \$1,093,510 in Section 5309 funds by NCDOT. This amendment adds this funding and corresponding state and local match amounts to the project. This represents an increase in funding from \$1.8 million to \$3.2 million for this project. Finally, this amendment revises the project description to clarify the nature of this facility, and the specific work tasks that will be performed with the allocated funds. The requested action is to approve the amendment as presented.

Bob Landreth moved to approve the amendment as presented; Mary Rakestraw seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to approve the amendment as presented.

## **3. Congestion Management System**

Jeff Sovich advised that in January, the TAC adopted a Detailed CMS Outline, which fulfilled interim FHWA guidelines for new Transportation Management Area's, provided that a full CMS is adopted no later than the next LRTP update. In the May MPO meeting, the TAC heard an in-depth presentation of the findings of the CMS consultant team, Martin-Alexiou-Bryson. MAB has completed the final CMS Report, which is now available on the MPO website. The CMS establishes policies and procedures for ensuring that the capacity of existing transportation infrastructure is maximized before resources are devoted to constructing new facilities. The requested action is to adopt the Final Congestion Management System Report as presented.

Mary Rakestraw moved to approve the Final CMS Report as presented; Bob Landreth seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to adopt the Final CMS Report as presented.

## **Business / Potential Action Items**

### **1. Future Meeting Schedule**

Jeff Sovich advised that the current MPO meeting schedule has presented time conflicts for some TAC members. Accordingly, staff have prepared several potential options for a revised schedule of meeting dates and times, which were then presented to the TAC. The TAC reviewed their calendars and determined that for August through December 2004, the regular meeting date would be shifted to the fourth Wednesday of each month, and that the TAC will meet from 1:45 to 3:45 pm, except in the months of November and December, when the meeting date would be shifted to the third Wednesday, to avoid conflicts with the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. The August 25 TAC meeting will be held in the J. Douglas Galyon Depot, following the publicity event for the statewide 511 traveler information system.

### **2. Piedmont Greenway**

Charles Brummitt advised that among the roles of the Piedmont Land Conservancy is the protection of urban green space, which has inspired the Conservancy's current efforts to plan for and implement the proposed Piedmont Greenway. During the late 1990s, the Conservancy initiated a capital campaign to raise funds for planning work on the Piedmont Greenway project. The Conservancy contracted with the

firm Greenways Incorporated to conduct this work. Greenways Incorporated held a series of public meetings in the course of developing the Piedmont Greenway master plan, which was completed in the spring of 2003. Since that time, the Conservancy has been working with a technical committee comprised of representatives from Greensboro, Guilford County, Kernersville, Winston-Salem, Forsyth County, and NCDOT. Representatives of the City of High Point have also joined the committee recently, and investigations are under way as to how High Point may be connected into this project. The Conservancy's current mission is to generate support for the Piedmont Greenway concept, as it has been developed.

The Greenway would be a regional linear park, connecting Winston-Salem, Kernersville, and Greensboro. This facility would be an investment in the Triad's future quality of life. The benefits of the Greenway would include economic, transportation, public health, environmental, and regional cooperation aspects that would extend to all sectors of the regional population. The Greenway would build upon the region's already strong foundation of trails by connecting the Owl's Roost Trail, the Bicentennial Greenway, Triad Park, and Salem Lake Trail.

The Piedmont Triad is currently at a competitive crossroads, due to the national recession, as well as the recent losses of many jobs locally. The Triad now needs to compete for a different types of jobs that are less traditional and more creativity-dependent than we have focused on in the past. These jobs will require workers with different skillsets and different expectations for amenities in their community. In the Triad, the available green space is limited and becoming more so. The Piedmont Greenway presents an opportunity to help preserve some of this green space, and as always, the sooner planning and construction on such a project begins, the less expensive it will be in the end.

The vision and goals that the technical committee have developed include providing: recreation that is close to home; alternative transportation connections; opportunities for appreciating nature; connections to area historic sites; opportunities for celebrating community; and local tax base enhancement. A wide variety of survey data supports the value that communities place on parks, green space, and outdoor recreation, as well as the range of substantial benefits that such amenities provide.

Considerable work remains to be done in order to make the Piedmont Greenway a reality. The estimated cost of construction, excluding land acquisition, is \$270,000 per mile. In addition to the funding needs, implementing the Greenway will involve planning coordination among the regional partners, selection of a final route, and getting past the hurdle of constructing the first several links. The Conservancy expects that the Greenway project would be completed mile by mile over a period of ten years or more, but ultimately, the success of this project will depend on collaboration. Over the next several months, we would like for the Greensboro TAC to consider adopting a resolution of support for the Piedmont Greenway.

Jim Westmoreland advised that it may be more appropriate for the TAC to indicate its support for the Greenway through a resolution in conjunction with future NCDOT calls for Enhancement projects or other grant opportunities. In addition, a resolution of support by the Guilford County Board of Commissioners and the Greensboro City Council may be an appropriate step prior to action by the TAC. This project is included as a proposed project in the proposed 2030 LRTP, a step intended to facilitate the project development process of the respective jurisdictions and related future funding related actions that may come before the TAC.

Bob Landreth stated that involvement by the universities may be an important component of implementing this project.

### **3. Noise Wall Landscaping**

Tyler Meyer advised that this item is being presented to follow-up on previous discussions about landscaping in conjunction with Urban Loop and the I-40 widening project, and in particular how NCDOT's landscaping policies and plans can be applied to the noise walls along these facilities.

Connie Morgan advised that she and Jeff Lackey have been developing a landscaping concept that covers both the Urban Loop and the I-40 widening project. NCDOT has adopted a philosophy of installing sustainable landscapes. NCDOT defines a sustainable landscape as a zone of random width, located behind the "clean-up" mowing limits, that combines hardscapes and colorful plantings within an area that is managed to control undesirable species but minimize maintenance. The intent of this policy is to produce roadside landscaping that is more environmentally friendly and more economical.

The density and formality of sustainable landscapes vary with different treatment levels and roadway configurations, but a range of typical cross-sections and styles has been developed to illustrate the effects of sustainable landscape installation. Sustainable landscapes can also be designed to create a theme, providing a coherent and continuous appearance within a corridor. An example of this concept would apply a "four seasons" theme to the I-40 corridor in Greensboro, to coordinate with Four Seasons Town Centre. This example would use plants that showcase all four seasons, combined with hardscape elements such as stone walls and split-rail fencing, to add year-round visual appeal. Such themes could be developed for, and applied to, both the I-40 corridor and the Urban Loop, although some segments of the I-40 corridor present constraints due to the limited plantable area, high heat re-radiation by pavement and noise walls, obstruction of sunlight by noise walls, safety considerations for maintenance crews.

Jim Westmoreland advised that in previous meetings, the TAC have inquired as to the cost of upgrading the standard noise walls along the Urban Loop, to brick noise walls. NCDOT has estimated that the cost of upgrading the currently planned noise walls to brick would be approximately \$1.8 million. NCDOT will work with local governments to construct noise walls in the style that they prefer, provided that the local government or MPO bears any costs in excess of the standard treatment. However, the functionality of the noise walls in reducing the incidence of freeway traffic noise on surrounding properties is the same, regardless of the aesthetic treatment. By contrast, funding for landscaping installation on TIP projects is established by a formula as 1% of the total project cost. That amount is then distributed over the length of the project, based on input from the local MPO. NCDOT sometimes devotes more landscaping resources as appropriate on a project by project basis. Accordingly, the most cost-effective option for improving the visual character of the noise walls along the I-40 widening project and the Urban Loop will be to utilize the allocated landscaping funds to install landscaping treatments that will partly screen the noise walls and reduce the monotonous appearance of the standard noise wall style. After discussion, the TAC concurred with the approach of pursuing appropriate landscaping treatments rather than brick noise wall treatments.

### **4. Guilford County Burlington Road Resolution**

Tyler Meyer advised that the Guilford County Board of Commissioners recently adopted a resolution requesting consideration by NCDOT and the City of Greensboro for possible future improvements to the Burlington Road / East Market Street corridor. The types of improvements mentioned in the resolution include emphasizing the corridor's "gateway" function, upgrades to more efficiently serve the traffic needs of the area, enhanced signage, and land use amenities, such as continuous curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. The resolution has been distributed to the City and to NCDOT, and is being brought to your attention today in the context of consideration for future transportation priorities.

Jim Westmoreland advised that a feasibility study would be the first step of creating either a federal or state funded project or a future city bond project. A feasibility study would identify the purpose and need for such improvements and assess a range of design and cost issues. This would facilitate consideration of a potential project for consideration in the project prioritization process.

Bob Landreth asked the likelihood of establishing a project priority at this location. Tyler Meyer noted that current and anticipated traffic volumes indicate the roadway has adequate capacity so a priority on widening appears problematic. However if the focus is on aesthetics, curb and gutter, sidewalks and the like, than the prioritization would come back to more general community priorities. The proposed 2030 LRTP does identify long range improvements of this nature on Burlington Road. Further discussion indicated that the proposed Burlington Road improvements should remain under consideration in the future as area roadway enhancement priorities are developed.

## **5. Airport Area Transportation Study Priorities**

Tyler Meyer advised that in May, 2003, the TAC adopted amendments to the Thoroughfare Plan based on the recommendations of the Airport Area Transportation Study. Since these amendments were adopted, there have been continuing discussions about land use planning in the airport area, including potential siting of the future Triad Metro Park. There has also been further consideration, through the long range transportation plan process, of concerns expressed regarding the proposed alignments of these facilities. Finally, regional discussions have continued, regarding priorities, facility location, and other issues. During the Thoroughfare Plan amendment process the TAC indicated its intent for these corridors to move into the project development process as soon as possible, to determine the feasibility of, and likely timeline for, implementation.

MPO staff have reviewed the proposed corridors and have assigned a priority order based solely on technical considerations. For instance, from the standpoint of maintaining adequate traffic flow, the extension of the re-located Bryan Boulevard to NC 68 would appear to hold the highest priority. However, the purpose of this discussion is to provide an opportunity for the TAC to give your feedback on this prioritization, and indicate which of these facilities should move forward first.

Sandy Carmany stated that she has heard concerns regarding High Point's stated desire to extend Sandy Ridge Road north of Market Street as a freeway, when High Point plans only surface street improvements to Sandy Ridge Road and Johnson Street south of I-40 rather than a freeway. This inconsistency appears problematic.

After additional discussion, TAC found that the I-73 connection from the NC 68 / US 220 Connector should be the top priority. Doug Galyon stated that at the last Board of Transportation meeting, he requested the Transportation Planning Branch to investigate the I-73 / I-74 route shown on the Thoroughfare Plan. They will be inquiring with FHWA into the feasibility of a design of this nature. A report on their findings is expected at the next Board of Transportation meeting, and this should shed further light on the matter.

## **6. 2030 LRTP Next Steps**

Tyler Meyer advised that the public comment period for the Draft 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan runs through August 11. The full draft is available on the LRTP web page. A final public involvement meeting is scheduled for July 29. Following this meeting, MPO staff will compile, review, and analyze

the comments submitted. The draft will be revised as appropriate to address issues raised in comments by NCDOT, the public, and other entities. The final 2030 LRTP will then be presented to the TAC for adoption in August. The LRTP will then be reviewed by the federal agencies, and should become effective on October 1, 2004.

## **7. MPO Strategic Reports**

Air Quality Update – Tyler Meyer noted EPA’s proposed designation of Guilford, Forsyth, Davidson, Randolph and Stokes County for fine particulate matter (PM 2.5), the expected timeline of this action, and some of the issues that this could be expected to create. Sandy Carmany advised that the 8-hour ozone Early Action Compact committee will meet next on August 2. The committee will discuss turning the transportation related measures over to the MPOs to implement and whether there are any other chosen measures for which no group or entity has been given implementation responsibility. The Southern Environmental Law Center, has filed an intent to sue the EPA, alleging that the Early Action Compact process is invalid. The committee had been planning to invite representatives of the SELC to attend the August meeting, but has decided to delay that until the September meeting, in order to allow for more time to formulate responses to the SELC's comments regarding the EAC milestone documentation that has been submitted.

Project Planning Activities - Tyler Meyer advised that four technical feasibility studies had recently been completed to NCDOT standards by the MPO. This is the first step in the NCDOT project development process. For these to move forward as state or federal projects, the next step will be entry into the environmental document phase once funding has been identified.

- The Horsepen Creek Road study found that the proposed widening is both needed and feasible. The next step is to seek federal and state funding commitments and approval to begin an environmental document.
- The Summit Avenue study found that the section north of Bryan Park Road should be incorporated into project R-4707, the US 29 interchange at Reedy Fork Parkway. This recommendation has been accepted by NCDOT, which is currently revising the R-4707 project limits accordingly. The section south of Bryan Park Road will need further evaluation with the new travel demand model (in 2005) to demonstrate sufficient projected traffic volumes to justify the proposed widening improvements.
- The Cone Boulevard Extension and Urban Loop Interchange Study, and the Fleming Road / Lewiston Road Connector and Urban Loop Interchange Study found that the process for establishing projects for these improvements should be deferred until after Urban Loop construction. Because these two interchanges have been made eligible for the state Highway Trust Fund, the study recommends that the City of Greensboro work with the NCDOT Design Unit to develop designs for the Urban Loop at these locations that would permit cost-feasible interchange construction in the future. The City could likely construct the connector roadways prior to Loop construction, but this option is not recommended at this time.

## **Other Items**

### **1. Board Member Report**

Doug Galyon advised that there was recently another conference committee meeting regarding the proposed surface transportation reauthorization bill. Initial feedback among transportation officials has been positive, but inside sources anticipate that the bill will not be completed until after the November election, which will require the Congress to pass another extension to the current bill. By contrast, the

state legislature and Governor recently approved a modification to the Highway Trust Fund law sought by NCDOT through the budget bill.

If additional landscaping funds are needed within the MPO, staff should notify Doug Galyon, who will assist in accessing a supplemental funding source.

Mike Cowan advised that the I-40 widening project is nearly complete and that crews are working on finishing details. The recent flooding on I-40 was determined to be the result of debris and construction materials that had blocked a storm drain.

## **2. Reports, Concerns, and Discussion from MPO Area Towns**

None.

## **3. Citizen Comments**

None.

## **4. Regional Transportation News**

Sandy Carmany advised that the regional Enhancements Grant review committee met last week and did not recommend Phase 2 of the Southeast Trail Connector for funding. The funding denial was not based on the quality of the project, but due to the fact that another project was awarded most of the funding available in the region. The Big Tree Trail application was not considered for a funding award due to a procedural fault.

## **5. Wrap-Up**

The TAC adjourned at 5:05 p.m.